

SOFCCC

Special Operations Forces Captain's Career Course

BY CAPTAIN SHAWN STANGLE

In 2012, the Senior Leaders of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School sought to strengthen the characteristics that define the Civil Affairs, Special Forces and Psychological Operations regiments through the development of the Special Operations Captain's Career Course. Due to the demand, the three regiments developed a course that trains and educates special operations forces captains in a more unified manner, taught by special operators for special operators. SWCS not only gained operational benefits but assisted the Army in overcoming fiscal constraints as well. In October 2012, Headquarters Department of the Army instructed SWCS to conduct the Special Operations Captain's Career Course pilot. To date, nearly 1000 ARSOF future leaders have graduated from SOFCCC. SOFCCC is tirelessly working to support the ARSOF Next vision of "creating an ARSOF identity that is universally accepted by its formations and recognized by those it serves."

What is a Center of Excellence?

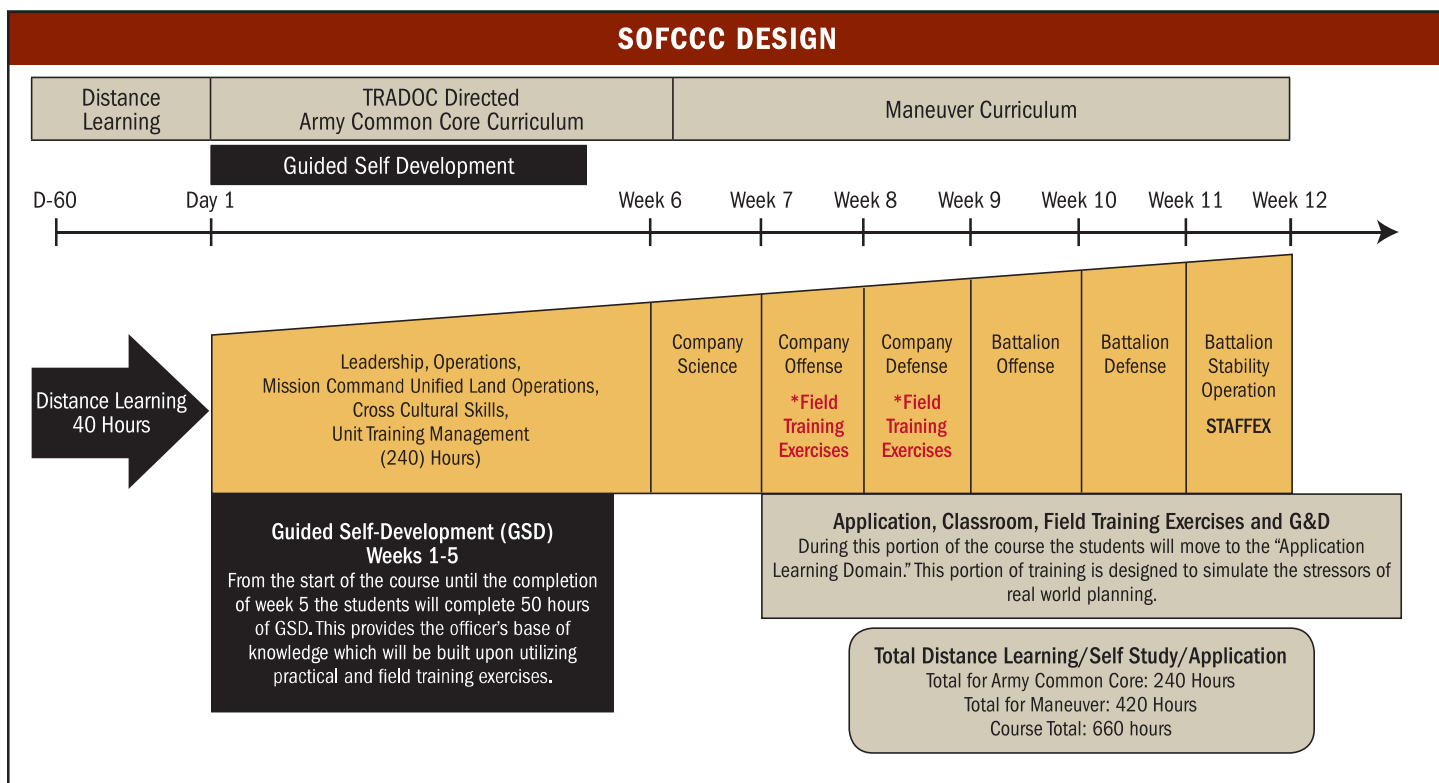
The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command defines a Center of Excellence as "a designated command or organization within an assigned area of expertise that executes one or more TRADOC core functions; develops and integrates capabilities across the Army warfighting functions; performs the force modernization responsibilities of the proponent." The U.S. Army has eight designated CoEs that oversee 32 Army schools. Each CoE focuses on an expertise aligned with an Army Warfighting Function. Prior to the addition of the seventh WfF of Engagement, the special operations community aligned with Movement and Maneuver. Although Special Forces officers attended the Maneuver Center of Excellence, the ARSOF regiments attended any available CoE. Without all ARSOF officers receiving a unified education, a disparity in planning and maneuver doctrine developed. This disparity in skills was created due to the diverse backgrounds of recruited officers and the education received from various CoEs. Today, the Engagement WfF enables SWCS as the SOCoE to develop education programs for special operations junior officers that provides a shared purpose, understanding, ideas and teachings. An increased force capability now exists because of the commonality in education.

On the first day of the SOFCCC, the integration of the SOF imperatives and the lifetime commitment to the mission of the ARSOF regiments begins, as does the relationships between members assessed into all three regiments. This cementing of relationships allows for continued collaboration throughout their careers. SOF-

CCC develops ARSOF officers who are prepared to integrate within any operational environment using critical and creative thinking skills via the "SOF mindset." Simply stated, the SOF mindset is one distinctively created to thrive in ambiguous situations and the ability to produce extraordinary results. The focus of the education in SOFCCC works to develop the human as the platform and create an understanding that education is a force capability. Students also leave with an understanding of how to utilize Army planning processes to assist in the improvement of military force capabilities in Army operations. Graduates possess a refined institutional knowledge of maneuver operations and a greater understanding of the SOF lifelong learning model.

Members of the special operations community designed SOFCCC based on an approved Common Core curriculum from the School of Advanced Leadership and Tactics based at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Prior to arriving to the course, special operations candidates complete coursework to establish baseline understanding via distance learning. SOFCCC consists of a 12-week course that involves six weeks for Army Common Core curriculum and six weeks for maneuver curriculum. Members of the special operations community serve as SOFCCC instructors to provide students with critical insight on the integration of SOF capabilities across the Army's Range of Military Operations. All SOFCCC instructors utilize the Army Learning Model to engage adult learners more effectively, capitalize on experiential learning and develop knowledge retention skills.

Nine core blocks of instruction comprise the Army Common Core focused on topics ranging from leadership to cross cultural skills and Army Training Management. The majority of the ACC is student-led and instructor-facilitated learning. The majority of the topics and blocks of instruction are introduced via the "Flip Model" where students are assigned homework to prepare for the next day's discussion. Utilizing the Flip Model in conjunction with the Army Learning Model increases knowledge retention and student classroom participation. With increased classroom participation, there is a better explicit knowledge transfer between students through shared experiences. ACC requires students to review tactical-based doctrine and classes to begin preparation for company and battalion science via guided self-development. Guided self-development provides the officers with a base of knowledge of maneuver doctrine which is further developed during company- and battalion-level planning exercises.



The maneuver curriculum consists of six weeks of instruction, which is completed at the company level utilizing the Troop Leading Procedures and at the battalion level utilizing the Military Decision Making Process. The company phase begins with one instructor-led planning exercise to educate students on the steps of TLPs, provide planning techniques and prepare students for isolation planning. Isolation planning consists of five company-level operations over the course of eight days. Upon the completion of each OPORD, students conduct terrain walks with their small group instructors to highlight the impacts of terrain on maneuver, allow students to individually analyze each operations order and develop heuristics to assist future planning. The company phase provides students with adequate planning skills to transfer to battalion-level planning.

The battalion phase consists of two battalion planning exercises and one final 96-hour dynamic staff exercise. Each operations order utilizes the same base scenario and builds in complexity for the planning exercise. The final exercise incorporates 24-hour continuous planning, staff estimates and a solid understanding of MDMP as a planning tool, not a product producing process. During the process students are assigned senior leader mentors acting as group and brigade commanders. Assigning mentors provides students critical feedback in addition to their SGIs throughout the process. The culmination of the final planning process is a Combined Arms Rehearsal provided by the students to senior leaders of the Army Special Operation community. Additional training executed during the final exercise has consisted of simulated media interviews with student planning teams and the introduction of host-nation role players by students to analyze the completed

plan from an alternate perspective. The exercise provides experiential learning to junior officers on how to brief senior leaders, which is common within the ARSOF regiments. When SOFCCC students complete the battalion phase, they are prepared to complete their assessed branch qualification course.

SOFCCC Resource Preservation and Continued Contributions to SOF

SOFCCC is not only an advantage in uniquely preparing assessed students for their branch qualification course but is a fiscally responsible solution to creating a unified identity. During sequestration, the special operations community analyzed the stress of multiple PCS moves in the requirement to attend a Captain's Career Course and complete a respective qualification course. With the creation of SOFCCC, the Army eliminated the burden of one PCS move on the assessed officer and family and saves approximately \$7 million per year or \$20,000 per Soldier in PCS costs. Reducing Captain's Career Course backlog for other CoEs has also been a benefit. Moreover, the ARSOF operational force has gained approximately 7 to 14 months of operational utilization, allowing officers more key developmental opportunities.

ARSOF must utilize the SOCoE more effectively to shape our ARSOF Promise to the Nation through the continued training and educational investment of our force. SOFCCC truly embodies the ARSOF Next "Promise to the Nation" through our stewardship in exemplifying the "ARSOF shared values, beliefs, vision and commitment." **SW**

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